



# Shakespeare For White Trash: Hamlet

*Classic literature translated into Modern English by Crad Kilodney*

## October 7, 2010 – Author’s Note:

*“Shakespeare For White Trash” is a series of condensed rewrites designed to make Shakespeare understandable and enjoyable to those who have little or no knowledge of him. The plots and characters are unchanged, but everything else has been radically restyled. Read my versions and you’ll be a Shakespeare fan forever!*

*These plays are intended to be performed, as well as read.*

## Main characters

Claudius — King of Denmark

Hamlet — Prince of Denmark, nephew of Claudius

Gertrude— Hamlet’s mother, Queen of Denmark

Polonius — Lord Chamberlain (someone who manages the King’s domestic affairs)

Laertes — son of Polonius

Ophelia — daughter of Polonius

Horatio — Hamlet’s best friend

Marcellus, Bernardo, Francisco — soldiers/officers

Cornelius, Voltemand, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Osric — courtiers (Courtiers are members of the King’s court. They may or may not actually do anything useful, but they get fed anyway.)

Reynaldo — servant of Polonius

Fortinbras — Prince of Norway, nephew of the King of Norway

Ghost (Hamlet’s dead father)

**Gist of the story:** Hamlet's father, the King of Denmark, was murdered by his brother, Claudius (Hamlet's uncle), who then remarried Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. Hamlet and Gertrude don't know Claudius murdered the old king. Then the dead king's ghost appears to Hamlet and tells him how he was murdered and tells Hamlet to get revenge on Claudius. When Claudius realizes Hamlet is on to him, he plots to get rid of Hamlet before Hamlet can get his revenge. By the end almost everybody dies. (How can you resist a story line like that?)

**Act 1, Scene 1.** *Elsinore Castle. Francisco is on guard duty on the watch platform when Bernardo arrives to relieve him.*

*Francisco:* It's about time, bro. I was supposed to be off at midnight.

*Bernardo:* Okay, you can go to bed. Wassup anyway?

*Francisco:* Not much.

*Bernardo:* If you see Horatio and Marcellus, tell them to move their butts. They're supposed to be on duty, too.

*Francisco:* Here they are now. *(Horatio and Marcellus arrive.)*

*Marcellus:* Hey, dudes. Have you seen that ghost again?

*Bernardo:* I didn't see nothing tonight.

*Marcellus:* Horatio says we're just imagining things. He don't believe in ghosts. But we seen it twice. I told him.

*Horatio:* There ain't gonna be no ghost.

*Bernardo:* Me and Marcellus seen it last night. *(Ghost appears.)*

*Marcellus:* Whoa! There it is again!

*Bernardo:* It looks just like the old king!

*Marcellus:* Horatio, you talk to it!

*Horatio:* Hey, ghost! Who are you? Say something!

*Bernardo:* It's leaving!

*Horatio:* Hey, I'm talking to you! You deaf or something? *(Ghost leaves.)*

*Bernardo:* Now do you believe us, Horatio?

*Horatio:* Holy shit!

*Marcellus:* Didn't it look like the old king?

*Horatio:* I'll say! You know, I think this is a bad omen. I think it means war with Norway. I think they want to take back the lands we won from them. *(Ghost appears again.)* Look out! There it is again!

...Hey, ghost, what're you trying to tell us? Hey!...Marcellus, hit it! (*Sound of rooster crowing. Ghost leaves.*)

*Marcellus:* Too late. It's gone.

*Bernardo:* I think it was going to speak when the rooster crowed.

*Horatio:* It didn't want to be here when the morning broke. Some kind of ghost rule, I think. We should tell Hamlet. I'm sure the ghost would talk to him.

*Marcellus:* Yeah, let's do that.

**Act 1, Scene 2.** *Elsinore Castle. A big hall. Claudius, Gertrude, Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes, Ophelia, and a bunch of extras.*

*King:* I want to thank everyone for coming to my brother's funeral and also to the wedding. We're sad and happy at the same time, obviously. Some of you may be wondering why the wedding happened so quickly after the funeral. Well, there's a good reason. There were a lot of leftovers after the funeral, and I didn't want them to go to waste. Now, down to serious business. Fortinbras, the Prince of Norway, apparently thinks this is a good time to bully us into giving back the lands my brother won from his late father. (*Beckons to Cornelius and Voltemand, who approach.*) So this is what I'm going to do. I'm writing to the King of Norway, who is pretty sick and probably doesn't know about all the shit his nephew Fortinbras has been kicking up, and I'm telling him to put the kid on a shorter leash. So, Cornelius and Voltemand, you'll act as my ambassadors to Norway and deliver my letter to the King and bring back his reply. (*Hands letter to them.*)

*Cornelius and Voltemand:* Yes, your Majesty. (*They leave.*)

*King:* And now, wassup with you, Laertes? You wanted to talk to me about something.

*Laertes:* I'd like to go back to France, to college. I came back to Denmark for your coronation, but that's done, so...

*King:* What does your father say?

*Polonius:* The kid's been nagging me so much, I gave in and told him he could go back to Paris.

*King:* I hear those Parisian girls are pretty hot, heh, heh. Well, okay, Laertes, you're only young once, as they say....And now, Hamlet, my new son. Why do you look so down?

*Hamlet:* No reason.

*Queen:* Don't grieve forever for your father. Everyone dies sometime.

*Hamlet:* You have no idea how miserable I feel.

*King:* It's understandable that you should grieve for your father, but don't take it to extremes. I want you to think of me as your new father. Don't go back to school in Wittenberg. Your mother and I want you to stay here with us.

*Queen:* Yes, Hamlet, don't leave us to go back to Wittenberg.

*Hamlet:* Okay, I'll stay.

*King:* Great! Now everyone's happy! Okay, snack time! *(Everyone leaves except Hamlet.)*

*Hamlet:* God, I'm so pissed off! My father's not even dead two months and my mother marries my uncle! What an incestuous bitch!

*(Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo walk in.)*

*Horatio:* Hail, Prince, good buddy!

*Hamlet:* So you made the trip from Wittenberg, too.

*Horatio:* For the funeral, naturally.

*Hamlet:* You mean the wedding.

*Horatio:* Well, that, too.

*Hamlet:* Worst wedding I ever attended. I kept thinking about my poor dead father.

*Horatio:* I think I saw him last night.

*Hamlet:* You saw my father?

*Horatio:* Marcellus and Bernardo saw his ghost two nights in a row, and I saw him on the third night. We were all scared shitless. It was him, for sure. He was all dressed in full armor.

*Hamlet:* Did you speak to him?

*Horatio:* I tried to, but he disappeared when the rooster crowed.

*Hamlet:* Well, I'm gonna be up there tonight with you guys in case he shows up. In the meantime, don't tell anyone about this. *(The others leave.)* My father's ghost? Dressed in armor? This sounds like some real heavy shit.

**Act 1, Scene 3.** *The house of Polonius. Laertes and Ophelia.*

*Laertes:* Well, I'm off to Paris. Don't forget to write. And as for Hamlet, I know you have a crush on him, but don't take him seriously. Even if he says he loves you, basically he just wants to fuck you. He's no different from any other guy. *(Polonius comes in.)*

*Polonius:* Are you still here? Go on, your ship's waiting. But just let me give you some fatherly advice before you go. Number one, keep your thoughts to yourself. Number two, be true to yourself. And number three, always pay cash.

*Laertes:* I will. Goodbye, Sis, and remember what I said. *(Leaves.)*

*Polonius:* What did Laertes say to you?

*Ophelia:* It was about Hamlet.

*Polonius:* You've been seeing him a lot, haven't you?

*Ophelia:* He says he loves me.

*Polonius:* Don't be naive, girl. He's just a horny prince. I don't want you to see him any more.

*Ophelia:* Okay, if you insist.

**Act 1, Scene 4.** *Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus are on the watch platform of the castle.*

*Hamlet:* What time is it?

*Marcellus:* Just past midnight.

*(Ghost appears.)*

*Horatio:* There it is!

*Hamlet:* Father! You're supposed to be dead! How can you be here? *(Ghost beckons Hamlet to follow.)*

*Horatio:* It wants to speak to you alone.

*Marcellus:* Don't go!

*Hamlet:* It's okay. What can it do to me? *(Follows ghost offstage.)*

*Horatio:* What if it's a demon in disguise?

*Marcellus:* Bro, we gotta follow them. *(They leave.)*

**Act 1, Scene 5.** *Another part of the watch platform.*

*Hamlet:* Okay, ghost, whoever you are. Talk to me.

*Ghost:* Son, I'm your father. I'm just a spirit now. Listen, I was murdered by your Uncle Claudius. Everyone was told I died from a snake bite while I was taking a nap in the orchard. Like, Denmark is really known for poisonous snakes, right? But your uncle put poison in my ears. Then with me dead, he seduced your mother. Now, you get that piece of shit for me, but spare your mother, understand? Okay, that's it. I'm outa here. Good luck. *(Ghost leaves. Horatio and Marcellus arrive.)*

*Horatio:* What happened?

*Hamlet:* It was my father's ghost, all right. But I can't say any more right now. Only thing is, you have to swear absolutely you won't say anything about this to anyone. Swear on my sword.

*Horatio and Marcellus (hands on sword):* We swear, bro.

**Act 2, Scene 1.** *The house of Polonius. Polonius and Reynaldo come in.*

*Polonius:* Reynaldo, here's some money I want you to take to Laertes in Paris. But before you see him, I want you to ask around among the other Danes in Paris and find out if he's been leading a wild life – you know, drinking, gambling, fucking hookers, that sort of thing.

*Reynaldo*: Right, boss. (*Reynaldo leaves. Ophelia comes in.*)

*Ophelia*: Dad, I'm so upset.

*Polonius*: What's the matter?

*Ophelia*: Hamlet came to see me, and he looked like a mess, and he was out of his mind. He just stared like a madman, and he groaned, and his head was bobbing up and down, and then he staggered out looking at me over his shoulder.

*Polonius*: The kid's hormones must be out of control. Or did you say something to upset him?

*Ophelia*: No, but I did refuse to see him, like you told me.

*Polonius*: Well, maybe that made things worse. But I was just being cautious for your sake. Anyway, let's go see the King.

**Act 2, Scene 2.** *In the castle. The King and Queen come in, along with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

*King*: Welcome, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The reason I asked you to come over is that Hamlet has been acting pretty weird. You've both known him since childhood, so I believe you can draw him out and find out what's eating him. You'll do that for your King and Queen, won't you?

*Queen*: Of course, they will, dear.

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*: Yes, your Majesties.

*Queen*: He's around somewhere. Just look for him. (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leave. Polonius comes in.*)

*Polonius*: The ambassadors are back from Norway with some good news. And I think I know why Hamlet is acting crazy. But let me bring in Voltmand and Cornelius first. (*He leaves very briefly and returns with Voltmand and Cornelius.*)

*King*: What's the news from Norway?

*Voltmand*: Well, here's the story. The King investigated what his nephew, Prince Fortinbras, was up to, and he got really pissed off that the kid was planning to invade us. So he gave him a big lecture and made him promise to forget about it. The kid agreed. The King was real happy about that, and he gave the kid three thousand crowns to take the army to attack Poland instead. (*Hands King a letter.*) The King asks you to allow Fortinbras and his army to pass through Denmark so they can get to Poland.

*King*: I guess that's reasonable. I'll send him an answer later. Well done. (*Voltmand and Cornelius leave.*)

*Polonius*: Well, that's one less thing to worry about. Now, about your Prince Hamlet. He's just totally bonkers.

*Queen*: Can you be more specific?

*Polonius:* He sent my daughter, Ophelia, this steamy love letter. I'll read it: '*Dear Ophelia, Your white breasts are driving me crazy. I am groaning for you. I love you. Yours forever, Hamlet.*'

*King:* How did she take it?

*Polonius:* Well, she's still a virgin. I told her Hamlet is a prince, and she's, well, not on the same level, and it just can't work. I told her not to have any more contact with him, and, naturally, she obeyed me. Now the Prince is obviously depressed and out of his mind.

*King:* Are you sure about this?

*Polonius:* Well, there's one way to prove it. I'll arrange for Ophelia to meet him in the lobby, where he likes to walk for hours. You can hide behind the curtain and see what happens.

*King:* That's a good idea. Okay.

*Polonius:* Wait! I see him coming! You guys get out of the room, and I'll see what I can get out of him. (*King and Queen leave hurriedly. Then Hamlet comes in, reading a book.*) How's it going, Prince?

*Hamlet:* I know you. You're a fishmonger.

*Polonius:* No, I'm not. I'm the Lord Chamberlain.

*Hamlet:* The sun breeds maggots in dead dogs. Say, you have a daughter, don't you?

*Polonius:* Of course.

*Hamlet:* Don't let her walk in the sun. She might get pregnant.

*Polonius (aside):* This guy's nuts....Uh, what are you reading, Prince? Anything good?

*Hamlet:* It's about old men with grey beards and wrinkled faces. I agree with it, but I don't like the style. And if you yourself could go backwards like a crab, you'd be as old as I am.

*Polonius:* Uh...right...yeah....That makes a lot of sense. Well, I really must be going. (*He leaves. Then Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come in.*)

*Hamlet:* Ros and Guil, my old friends. Wassup?

*Rosencrantz:* Not much. Just came for a friendly visit.

*Hamlet:* Oh, did you now? Just a friendly visit. How nice....(*Suddenly looking harsh*) And, of course, the King and Queen didn't send the two of you.

*Rosencrantz (squirming):* Oh, no!

*Guildenstern (squirming):* No, not at all!

*Rosencrantz:* That is, not as such.

*Guildenstern:* Well...that is...actually....



*Rosencrantz:* Uh...well...sort of.

*Guildenstern:* Sort of...maybe.

*Rosencrantz:* Sort of...yes.

*Guildenstern:* Just following orders, that's all.

*Hamlet:* I know I've been in a bad mood lately, but why not? After all, the earth is sterile, the air is foul, and what is man but a pile of dust anyway? Everyone thinks I'm crazy, but I'm only crazy when I want to be.

*Rosencrantz:* Well, then, there's a company of actors coming to put on a show. Maybe that'll cheer you up.

*(Polonius comes in.)*

*Polonius:* My lord, the actors have arrived. They can do any kind of play — tragedy, comedy, historical, postmodern, you name it. *(Four or five actors come in.)*

*Hamlet:* That's fine. I could use a laugh. Okay, you take care of these actors, Polonius. I'll just have a word with this guy. *(Polonius and all the actors leave except one. Hamlet speaks to him.)* Can you do "The Murder of Gonzago"?

*Actor:* Of course. We got a good review for it in *The Times*.

*Hamlet:* That's swell. I'm just going to make a few changes, however. Something to amuse the King.

*Actor:* Not a problem.

*Hamlet:* Very good. I'll see you about it later. Carry on. *(Actor leaves.)* And I'll see you guys tonight. *(Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leave.)* Yeah, something to amuse the King, my goddamn uncle. I should have just snuffed him by now. What's the matter with me? Don't I have the balls? I just have to be sure, that's all. I have to be absolutely sure he's guilty. I'll have the actors do a scene just like the murder of my father, and I'll watch my uncle's reactions. Then I'll know.

**Act 3, Scene 1.** *A room in the castle. King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Lords.*

*King (to Rosencrantz):* Well, you guys spoke to Hamlet. Why is he acting like a lunatic?

*Rosencrantz:* He admitted he was in a bad mood, but the things he said didn't make any sense to me.

*Guildenstern:* I thought he was being evasive.

*Rosencrantz:* He did seem to lighten up a bit when the actors arrived. He's looking forward to seeing the play tonight.

*King:* That's good. Try to keep his spirits up.

*Rosencrantz:* We will, my lord. *(Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leave.)*

*King:* You should go now, Gertrude. Hamlet should be coming along about now, and Ophelia will meet him. Polonius and I will be hiding to see how he behaves. This way we'll find out if he's just lovesick, or if there's something else making him act crazy. *(Queen leaves.)*

*Polonius:* He's coming. Let's get out of sight. *(King and Polonius leave. Hamlet comes in. Ophelia is off to the side, and he doesn't notice her.)*

*Hamlet:* To be, or not to be: that's the question. Or, in other words, should I do something, or should I do nothing?...Fuck me. I so much need a beer right now....Oh! Ophelia.

*Ophelia:* How are you?

*Hamlet:* Fine.

*Ophelia:* I'm giving you back all your gifts and letters.

*Hamlet:* I never gave you anything.

*Ophelia:* Yes, you did. Take them. *(Hamlet doesn't take them.)*

*Hamlet:* I did love you once, but not any more.

*Ophelia:* You deceived me.

*Hamlet:* You don't know what terrible thoughts I have in my head. You should never trust any man. Take my advice and become a nun. Where's your father?

*Ophelia:* At home.

*Hamlet:* He's a dickhead.

*Ophelia:* Hey, God, can you restore this man's sanity?

*Hamlet:* You women make me sick. You turn men into monsters. You're two-faced, you're phony, you act on a whim and then pretend it's just ignorance. Let's put an end to marriage. Those that are already married will be allowed to live — except for one. *(Leaves.)*

*Ophelia:* How can a noble prince turn into such a total creep? And I thought he loved me. I feel like complete shit! *(She leaves. Then the King and Polonius come in.)*

*King:* The Prince isn't lovesick, Polonius. There's something else going on, and it sounds dangerous to me. I'm going to send him to England on some errand. I'll send him to collect the money they owe us. Maybe a change of scenery will do him some good. What do you think?

*Polonius:* That would probably be good. But I still think he's just upset over Ophelia breaking up with him. But I have a great idea. After the play tonight, have the Queen talk to him privately and try to get him to open up. I'll hide somewhere where I can listen in. After all, you've got to get a report from someone like me who can be objective. If the Queen can't get the truth out of him, send him to England, or do whatever you think is best.

*King:* Yeah, let's play it that way. *(They leave.)*

**Act 3, Scene 2.** *A hall in the castle, with a small stage and chairs or benches for the audience. Hamlet and Horatio come in.*

*Hamlet:* Horatio, you are one solid dude. You are totally balanced.

*Horatio:* Thanks.

*Hamlet:* I know I can depend on you. Now, listen. The actors are going to stage a scene that's just like my father's death. I want to gauge my uncle's reactions, and I want you to be watching, too. Then afterwards we'll compare notes. This is the only way I can be sure that the ghost was telling me the truth.

*Horatio:* My eyeballs will be glued to him, bro.

*(Sound of trumpets and drums. The King and Queen come in, along with Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and the rest of the audience.)*

*Queen:* Sit by me, Hamlet.

*Hamlet:* No, I think I'll sit next to Ophelia.

*(Everyone sits down. Oboes play to introduce the actors. They put on a pantomime as follows: a King and Queen are in a garden. The King feels sleepy and lies down for a nap. The Queen leaves. Then a shrouded man comes in, takes the King's crown, kisses it, pours something from a small bottle into the King's ear, and leaves. The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and gesticulates hysterically. The poisoner returns and pretends to be horrified. The King is carried away. Then the poisoner woos the Queen with gifts and caresses, and after a bit of hesitation, she embraces him.)*

*Ophelia:* I don't get it.

*Hamlet:* It's a crime drama.

*King (rising):* This is bullshit! Stop this show now! Fuck these clowns! Show's over! Everyone go home! *(Everyone leaves the hall except Hamlet and Horatio.)*

*Hamlet:* Well, you saw it. My uncle's a fucking murderer.

*Horatio:* Yep, sure looks that way, bro.

*(Polonius comes back.)*

*Polonius:* Prince, the King is very upset, and your mother wants to see you.

*Hamlet:* Fine, I'll be right there. Bug off. *(Polonius leaves.)* Now I'm ready to settle things with my uncle! And I have a few things to say to my mother, too! *(Hamlet leaves.)*

**Act 3, Scene 3.** *A room in the castle. The King, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern come in.*

*King:* I want that punk out of the country! That play was his idea, I know it! He's fucking crazy! It's not safe to keep him around here! I'm going to send him to England, and you guys are going with him, so go and get ready.

*Rosencrantz: We're outa here! (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leave. Polonius comes in.)*

*Polonius: My lord, he's going to see the Queen in her room. I'll hide behind the curtain, and I'll give you a full report afterwards.*

*King: Go to it. (Polonius leaves. The King faces a crucifix on the wall.)* The shit has finally hit the fan. I'm a fucking murderer. I murdered my own brother. If I could only pray for forgiveness...but I wouldn't know what to say. How can I be forgiven if I'm still wearing the crown and I still have the Queen?...Well, I could try to repent anyway. I should force myself to pray. *(Kneels in prayer; silently. Hamlet is passing by, walking very softly, and stops to observe the King from a distance.)*

*Hamlet: I could kill him now. Get my revenge over with. But if I kill him while he's repenting, he'll just go straight to heaven....No, I'd rather kill him when he isn't looking so holy and good. (Hamlet leaves. The King rises from his prayer.)*

*King: I don't think I prayed very good. It felt too fake.*

**Act 3, Scene 4.** *The Queen's room. The Queen and Polonius come in.*

*Polonius: He's on his way. You've got to tell him he's gone way over the line. You gotta tell him straight.*

*Queen: I will. Now get out of sight. Hurry. (Polonius hides behind curtain. Hamlet comes in.)*

*Hamlet: What is it, Mom, as if I couldn't guess?*

*Queen: Hamlet, you've offended your father — that is, your uncle.*

*Hamlet: No, you're the one who has offended my father — that is, my father.*

*Queen: What are you talking about?*

*Hamlet: You're the Queen. You're the wife of your dead husband's brother. And, I'm sorry to say, you're my mother.*

*Queen: Hamlet! How dare you speak to me like that!*

*Hamlet: Just sit there and don't move! I'm going to prove to you how wicked you've been! (Advances aggressively.)*

*Queen: What are you going to do, murder me? Help!*

*Polonius (behind curtain): Help! Murder!*

*Hamlet (drawing sword): Sounds like a rat! Soon to be a dead rat! (Stabs through curtain and strikes Polonius fatally.)*

*Polonius (behind curtain): Oh, I'm dead!*

*Queen: What have you done!*

*Hamlet: Oh, sorry. Was that the King by any chance?*

*Queen:* Look at the terrible thing you've done!

*Hamlet:* Yeah, terrible. Almost as terrible as killing a king and marrying his brother.

*Queen:* What? Me? Kill a king?

*Hamlet (pulls curtain aside, revealing Polonius):* Oh, not the King. A different asshole....Tough luck, you bastard.

*Queen:* Why do you accuse me of killing a king? Do you mean your father?

*Hamlet:* Are you blind? Are you stupid? Don't you realize my uncle murdered my father? You've been sleeping with a fucking murderer all this time! Don't tell me you didn't know!

*Queen:* No! No! I don't want to hear this!

*(Ghost of the dead King appears, but only Hamlet can see it.)*

*Hamlet (to Ghost):* Yeah, I know. I haven't done what you told me to do yet.

*Ghost:* Get on with it. Don't wimp out on me.

*Queen:* Who are you talking to?

*Hamlet:* My father. He's right there. Can't you see him? *(Ghost leaves.)* Oh, he's gone now.

*Queen:* You're deluded!

*Hamlet:* No, you're the one who's been deluded. You've been in a state of denial. Don't make things worse. Don't sleep with my uncle any more. Make any excuse. I have to kill him. It's a matter of revenge.

*Queen:* I feel sick.

*Hamlet:* Deal with it. Just don't sleep with him again.

*Queen:* All right.

*Hamlet:* Now I have to go to England. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern will be carrying sealed letters for the King of England. I trust them like a couple of snakes. It's all a plot by my uncle to get rid of me. But he won't succeed. I'm a step ahead of *him*....Now I'll just lug your Lord Chamberlain son of a bitch out of your room. Good night. *(Hamlet drags off Polonius.)*

**Act 4, Scene 1.** A room in the castle. The King and Queen.

*Queen:* Hamlet's insane! He heard Polonius behind the curtain, and he shouted "A rat!" and then he stabbed him!

*King:* My God! It could have been one of us! We're not safe with him around! And we'll be blamed for Polonius's death because we didn't keep a close eye on Hamlet when we knew he was crazy. Where is he now?

*Queen:* He's dumping the body somewhere. I don't know.

*King:* We've got to get him out of the country immediately. Then we'll have to come up with some explanation for Polonius's death....Hey, Guildenstern! Rosencrantz! *(The two of them come in.)* Listen, Hamlet's crazy. He just killed Polonius. Get some guys together and try to find Hamlet. And find that body! *(They leave.)* Come on, Gertrude, we have to round up the councillors and tell them what's happened. Maybe we can think of a way to avoid a political disaster. *(King and Queen leave.)*

**Act 4, Scene 2.** *This scene is deleted.*

**Act 4, Scene 3.** *A room in the castle. The King and Queen.*

*King:* Hamlet's dangerous. But we can't punish him. The people love him too much. It would be messy. And we don't want to give the impression that we're desperate to get him out of the country. We've got to play it cool.

*(Hamlet is brought in, escorted by Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and attendants.)*

*King:* Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

*Hamlet:* He's hidden. If you don't find him within a month, you'll be able to smell him when you go upstairs.

*King (to attendants):* Go find the body! *(They leave.)* Now, look, Hamlet, we have to get you out of the country. For your own safety, you understand. The boat's ready to take you to England.

*Hamlet:* Oh, goody, I just love England this time of year. Goodbye, Mother, I'm off to England! *(Leaves.)*

*King:* Get going, you guys. I want him out of here at once. Everything's been arranged. *(Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leave.)* ... And, England, if you know what's good for you, you'll do what it says in those letters, and *(gestures with finger cutting throat)*...no more Hamlet. And that saves my royal butt.

**Act 4, Scene 4.** *A field near the castle. Fortinbras, a Captain, and some soldiers.*

*Fortinbras:* Captain, go tell the Danish King we're passing through. Ask him if he wants us to bring anything back from Poland.

*Captain:* Yes, my lord. *(Everyone except the Captain leaves in one direction. Hamlet, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and others arrive from the other direction.)*

*Hamlet (to his party):* You guys can go on ahead. I just want to talk to this dude for one minute. *(The escorts depart.)* Hey, my man, whose army is that?

*Captain:* We're from Norway, sir.

*Hamlet:* On your way to a fight, I take it.

*Captain:* Yes, sir. Against Poland.

*Hamlet:* Who's in command?

*Captain:* Prince Fortinbras, the King's nephew.

*Hamlet:* Gonna conquer the whole country, are you?

*Captain:* No, sir, just a small, useless patch of land that's hardly worth the bother, especially since the Polacks have built up their defenses. But that's Prince Fortinbras for you. He wants it, and goddamn it, he's gonna take it. *(Captain leaves in the direction of the castle.)*

*Hamlet:* Wow! That Fortinbras is some kick-ass dude! He doesn't fuck around. He doesn't waste time thinking about it. What do I do? I just keep thinking about what I'm supposed to do instead of just doing it. The Norwegian makes me look like a wuss by comparison. Well, that's a lesson for me to learn. No more thinking. I've got to act. I'm out for blood now. *(Leaves.)*

**Act 4, Scene 5.** *A room in the castle. King, Queen, and Horatio. A Gentleman comes in.*

*Gentleman:* Ophelia's extremely upset about her father's death. She's babbling a lot of stuff about conspiracies, and rumors are spreading among the people. It's a dangerous situation.

*Horatio:* You should speak to her, your Majesty.

*King:* Bring the girl in. *(Gentleman leaves. Ophelia comes in.)*

*Ophelia (singing tunelessly):* He is dead and gone....He is dead and gone....At his head the grass-green turf, at his heels a stone....*(speaking normally)*...My father is dead in the cold ground. My brother will hear about this. Good night. *(She goes out, sort of skipping.)*

*King:* What the fuck! *(To Horatio):* Follow her. Keep an eye on her. *(Horatio leaves.)* Gertrude, the shit just keeps getting deeper. First her father gets killed. Then your son has to be sent away. And now the people are spreading wild rumors about Polonius's death. I may have been too quick to get him buried. And now Laertes has returned from France. God knows what kind of bullshit he's heard by now.

*(Laertes comes in.)*

*Laertes:* Where's the King!...You bastard! What did you do to my father?

*King:* Take it easy, Laertes! I had nothing to do with your father's death.

*Laertes:* My sister is out of her mind! Have you seen her? And exactly how did my father die? And why wasn't he given a proper funeral? You'd better have some good answers!

*King:* Yes, lad! I know how upset you are. Believe me, I'm upset, too. Now, come with me, and I'll explain everything to you in private. *(They leave.)*

**Act 4, Scene 6.** *Horatio is in a room in the castle. A servant comes in.)*

*Servant:* Sir, there are a couple of sailors here who have a letter for you.

*Horatio:* Okay, show them in. *(Servant leaves. Sailors come in.)*

*Sailor:* Sir, if you're Horatio, I have a letter for you from the ambassador that was bound for England. *(Gives letter.)*

*Horatio (reading letter):* 'Attacked by pirates. I boarded their ship and was captured. They spared me. The sailors who delivered this have letters for the King. Make sure he gets them. The sailors will escort you to where I am. Ros and Guil unharmed, continuing to England. Saving the best till I see you. Hamlet.'

**Act 4, Scene 7.** *Another room in the castle. The King and Laertes.*

*King:* I hope you understand we're on the same side. Hamlet killed your father, and he was out to get me, too.

*Laertes:* You're the King. Why didn't you punish him?

*King:* It's not that simple. The Queen loves him too much, and I couldn't bear to hurt her. And the people love him so much, they would have held it against me.

*Laertes:* Look, all I know is, my father's dead and my sister has lost her mind, and I sure as hell am not going to take this shit.

*(Messenger arrives.)*

*Messenger:* Letters from Prince Hamlet, your Majesty. *(Messenger hands over letters, then leaves.)*

*King (reading letter):* 'Your Majesty, Returning tomorrow. Will explain everything when I see you. Hamlet.' What the fuck is this supposed to mean?

*Laertes:* Beats the hell out of me, but let him come. I'm gonna settle things with him.

*King:* Yes, yes, lad, but don't be hasty. We'll do this my way. I have a plan to make his death look like an accident.

*Laertes:* Whatever it is, I want in on it.

*King:* You will be. Trust me. Your star's on the rise. You're gonna come out on top. You know a Frenchman named Lamound?

*Laertes:* Gus Lamound, yeah. I know him from Paris.

*King:* Well, he was telling me one time that you're unbeatable with a sword. And Hamlet was there when he said it, and he practically shit himself. He wanted to challenge you first chance he got. Now he's back in Denmark and we'll invite him to a duel. What do you say? Are you up for it?

*Laertes:* I'll skin him alive.

*King:* Of course, when gentlemen duel in a sporting way, both swords are blunt. But here's the trick: we'll fix it so that Hamlet's sword is blunt and yours is sharp.

*Laertes:* Brilliant! And I've got some poison I can put on my sword. There's no cure for it. All I have to do is stick him once and he's dead meat.



*King:* Now, in case that doesn't work, I have a back-up plan. I'll have a cup of poisoned wine ready. He's bound to get thirsty if the fight goes on too long. I'll get him to drink the poison.

*(Queen comes in.)*

*Queen:* Laertes, I have some bad news for you. Your sister has drowned.

*Laertes:* Ophelia? Drowned? Where?

*Queen:* In the river. She just fell in somehow. She didn't even try to save herself. She was singing while she was drowning. I think it may have been suicide.

*Laertes:* My poor Ophelia!...Goodbye, my lord. There's no more time for words. *(Leaves.)*

*King:* We'd better follow him, Gertrude. This is really going to set him off. *(They leave.)*

**Act 5, Scene 1.** *The graveyard. King, Queen, Laertes, a priest, and attendants stand around Ophelia's coffin.*

*Queen:* Poor Ophelia! I always hoped you would marry Hamlet someday.

*Laertes:* I hope the bastard responsible for my sister's death suffers the worst possible fate. *(Falls on the coffin.)* Bury me with my sister!

*(Hamlet and Horatio arrive.)*

*Hamlet:* Dude, you are so full of shit with your fake act! I loved her more than you did!

*(Hamlet and Laertes fight.)*

*Laertes:* Fuck you!

*Hamlet:* Fuck you!

*King (to attendants):* Stop them! *(Attendants separate them.)*

*Hamlet:* He's a fucking phony, jumping on her coffin like that!

*King (restraining Laertes):* He's crazy. Don't listen to him.

*(Hamlet stalks off angrily.)*

*King (to Horatio):* You stick with him. *(Horatio follows Hamlet.)*

*King (to Laertes):* Just keep your cool. Remember what we talked about.

**Act 5, Scene 2.** *A hall in the castle. Hamlet and Horatio come in.*

*Hamlet:* I have to tell you what happened on the ship to England.

*Horatio:* Tell me everything.

*Hamlet:* My uncle was pretty desperate to get me out of the country, so I figured I wasn't supposed to come back alive. Ros and Guil were carrying sealed letters for the King of England, and I was damned

worried about what was in those letters, so I swiped them when Ros and Guil were sleeping. And guess what? My uncle told the King to execute me immediately.

*Horatio:* Holy shit!

*Hamlet:* So you know what I did? I replaced those letters with my own fakes telling the King to execute Ros and Guil instead. And I had my father's signet ring with the official seal, so I could seal the letters and make them look totally authentic.

*Horatio:* Dude, you are so bad! (*Slaps hands with Hamlet.*) But what about the pirates?

*Hamlet:* The next day this pirate ship attacked us. When the two ships were *this close* I jumped over by myself to fight them. But there was no way. I was outnumbered, so I had to give up. But when they found out I was the Prince of Denmark, they stopped the attack and let my ship go, with Ros and Guil still on board. And from then on it was like, oh, 'Can I bring you something, sir?', 'Are you warm enough, sir?', 'Is your bed to your liking, sir?', 'What can we do for you, sir?' I mean, these guys may have been pirates, but they weren't like those fucking jigaboos on the other side of Arabia. They brought me back and turned me over to some of our sailors, and here I am, well-fed and well-rested. I'd say we owe those pirates a favor.

*Horatio:* For sure. So Ros and Guil went on to England with the fake letters. I guess they ain't coming back.

*Hamlet:* I guess not.

*Horatio:* Your own uncle tried to have you snuffed. Fuckin' unbelievable.

*Hamlet:* And now I'm gonna snuff him, that piece of shit.

*Horatio:* He's going to find out pretty soon about Ros and Guil, though. The limeys will send word back.

*Hamlet:* Not before I get him. I only wish I hadn't blown a head valve with Laertes at his sister's burial. I should try to smooth it over with him.

(*Osric, a courtier, enters.*)

*Osric:* Glad to see you back in Denmark, my lord. The King has laid a big wager on you. It concerns Laertes, who is a great guy, as you know, and a perfect gentleman.

*Hamlet:* Yeah, for sure, Osric. He's right up there with the Pope.

*Osric:* My lord, the King is wagering that you can beat Laertes in a duel with swords.

*Hamlet:* Hey, tell him to get the swords out. I'm ready, and I'll win. I can beat Laertes. (*Osric leaves. A Lord enters.*)

*Lord:* My lord, the King and Queen will meet you here in the hall. The Queen would like you to make up with Laertes before the duel.

*Hamlet: Okay. (Lord leaves.)*

*Horatio: I have a bad feeling about this, bro. Why don't you beg off? I'll tell them you're sick or something.*

*Hamlet: No way. Whatever is meant to happen is gonna happen, for better or worse.*

*(The King, Queen, Laertes, Osric and Lords come in, along with attendants carrying several swords. Cups of wine are set on a table.)*

*King: Hamlet, shake hands with Laertes.*

*Hamlet: I'm sorry I acted like a jerk this morning. You know I respect you, man.*

*Laertes (somewhat stiffly): Okay, well, I appreciate the words.*

*Hamlet: Now, let's have a fair fight. Give us the swords.*

*(Osric offers two swords.)*

*Laertes: I don't like these. Bring me another one. (Hamlet accepts one of the swords. The attendants offer the others, and Laertes selects one carefully.)*

*Hamlet (making a few practice slashes): This one's good. They're all the same length, right?*

*Osric: Oh, yes, my lord.*

*King: All ready then? Okay, lads, go to it!*

*(Hamlet and Laertes square off and begin to duel. The fight goes back and forth for a while.)*

*Hamlet: Gotcha!*

*King: A fair hit! Well done! Have some wine, Hamlet. (Offers cup.)*

*Hamlet: Later. (More dueling.) Gotcha again, Laertes!*

*Laertes: Just barely.*

*Queen: I drink to your good luck, Hamlet! (Picks up poisoned cup.)*

*King: No, please don't drink, my dear!*

*Queen: Hey, I'm the Queen and I can drink if I want to. (Drinks.)*

*King: Uh, oh.*

*Hamlet: Come on, dude, gimme your best shot!*

*Laertes: I been saving it! (Laertes lunges with a flourish and sticks Hamlet on the arm. Hamlet reacts angrily, realizing Laertes was using a sharp sword. He leaps at Laertes, and they scuffle. In the confusion they end up with each other's swords. Hamlet, now holding the poisoned sword, wounds Laertes.)*

*King:* Stop them! This is out of control!

*(The Queen falls over.)*

*Osrice:* The Queen has fainted!

*Horatio:* Hey, both these guys are bleeding! What gives?

*Laertes:* Oh, shit, I'm dead!

*Hamlet:* What's wrong with my mother?

*Queen (gasping):* The wine...poison...(Dies.)

*Hamlet:* This is murder! Nobody leaves the room!

*Laertes (falls to floor):* Hamlet, that sword was meant to kill you. It was poisoned. We can't be saved. We're both going to die any minute. And your mother drank poisoned wine that was meant for you. It was the King's idea.

*Hamlet (sticks King with the poisoned sword):* Die, you fucker!

*King:* Oh, shit!

*Hamlet:* And now you drink the wine! *(Pours wine on the King's mouth. The King gasps and dies.)*

*Laertes:* Forgive me, Hamlet. My death is not your fault. And my father's death wasn't your fault....  
*(Dies.)*

*Hamlet:* I'm a dead man, Horatio. Just make sure everyone knows the truth about me. *(Takes the poisoned cup and drinks the little bit left.)* Fuck me.

*(Sound of marching and drums outside.)*

*Osrice:* It's Fortinbras and his army! They're back from Poland. And there are ambassadors from England, too.

*Hamlet:* Fortinbras....There's a man to look up to....He should be the next King, Horatio. *(Dies.)*

*(Fortinbras, Color Guard, some soldiers, the English ambassadors, and attendants come in.)*

*Fortinbras:* What the fuck happened here? Looks like the whole royal family is dead!

*Ambassador:* We came from England to report that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been executed, as, uh....requested.

*Horatio:* You guys are not going to believe all the shit that's gone down here.

*Fortinbras:* Tell me about it — later....Wow, this is too much. First I beat the crap out of the Polacks, and then I come here and find everybody dead. I guess that makes me the new King of Denmark. Is that good timing or what?

*Horatio:* The people will like you, sir. Hamlet liked you.

*Fortinbras:* Okay, some of you guys get these stiff's out of here. Make sure Hamlet gets a royal burial. *(Attendants start dragging bodies.)* And tell my soldiers to fire off the cannons as a salute for him....Now...this calls for a celebration! And since we're in Denmark, what are we drinking? Tuborg! *(Cheers from the Color Guard and soldiers.)* It's party time! We're gonna PARTY TILL WE DROP!

*(Cheering and revelry. As the curtain falls, the sounds of cannons are heard.)*

**END**

Posted on September 28, 2010 by Crad Kilodney, Toronto, Canada.

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